

CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES AND HISPANIC CONSTITUENTS:
OFFICIAL CONGRESSIONAL WEBSITES AS AN OUTREACH TOOL DURING THE
2014 MIDTERM ELECTIONS

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Bachelor of Arts in Political Science

By
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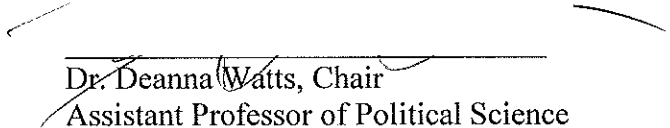
Congressional Candidates and Hispanic Constituents:

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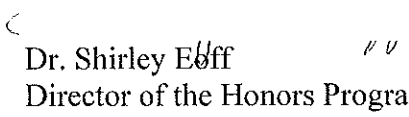
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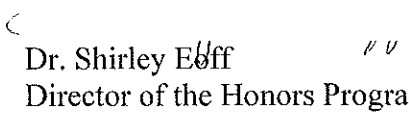
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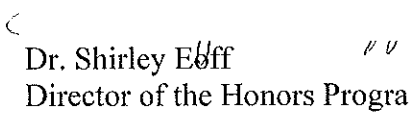


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ABSTRACT

This study examined 435 House.gov webpages of members in the 113th Congressional House of Representatives. In order to determine which political party reached out more to the Latino community, the sites were coded for English to Spanish translation, mention of immigration policy, and Hispanics in pictures on their House.gov webpage. The results suggest Democrats are more likely than Republicans to reach out to Latino constituents through Spanish translation content and pictures of Hispanics on their House.gov site. The results affirm that Democratic Representatives have webpages that have more Latino outreach functions, but a scarcity of examples shows that Congress as a whole has not begun to participate in Latino outreach through their House.gov sites. The results show that regardless of the rhetorical push from both parties to recruit the Latino population, representatives will engage in more outreach through their websites as the Hispanic population increases within their respective districts.

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INTRODUCTION

Democratic representation requires accountability to the elected body and requires that legislators participate in direct communication with their constituents (Pitkin 1967; Esterling, Lazer, and Neblo 2013). The democratic nature of American politics dictates that members in the House of Representatives must seek reelection every two years; as a result, members of Congress engage in constant public outreach activities to communicate and inform constituents of their policy positions (Lipinski 2004). Direct communication between political leaders and constituents establishes credibility, trust, and an empathetic connection that Fenno (1978) defined in his seminal work as the “presentation of self” (Gulati 2004; Esterling et al. 2013). Fenno (1978) declared that congressional representatives frame their messages with subtle cues to connect with their constituents on issues that the public feels are important in order to continually reinforce the trust of their supporters.

These cues include visual elements, and Gulati (2004) found that the overall design, choice of images, and site content could all influence how constituents perceive their representative. Similar to a first impression, online mediums allow legislators to alter constituents’ perceptions with pictures as representations of themselves (Gualati 2004). Goffman (1959) found that the characteristics a person has in a particular setting mirror how they act in other settings. Recently electronic mediums have been used as a tool for constituents to judge a representative’s characteristics and personal beliefs in all aspects of their lives.

Party Politics

As technology has progressed, incumbent Congressional House Representatives have been afforded a variety of new mediums to establish communication. As such, the widespread use of the internet has given legislators the opportunity to create interactive webpages to enhance direct communication with their constituents (Esterling et al. 2013). Advancements in media technology have introduced a new element into the art of constituent outreach. Since the mid-1990s, congressional members have used their official House.gov websites to express their political platform as well as to create a connection with their constituents and potential voters (Taylor and Kent 2004; Wilson 2009; Soon Ae ChunShulman 2010; Esterling et al. 2013). The internet offers voters easily accessible information and allows members of Congress to establish direct connections with their constituents by using relatable information on their webpages (Soon Ae ChunShulman 2010).

In 2006, Harvard University's Government Department conducted a survey that supported this claim. In general, the researchers found that 76% of respondents stated that they would seek out their congressional representative's official website if they wanted to become familiar with the policy preference of their representative (Esterling et al. 2013).

Additional studies have also found evidence suggesting that congressional candidates can directly influence voters through successful communication of their issue positions (Krosnick and Berent 1993; Alvarez 1997; Druckman, Hennessy, Kifer and Parkin 2010). The specifically tailored messages to the Hispanic community on Congressional members' websites represent a form of outreach considered Political Dialogue. Political Dialogue has roots in philosophy, but public figures have adopted it to communicate with constituents in order to meet the public's needs and be responsive to popular opinion and current affairs

(Taylor and Kent 2004). Graham (2002) defines Political Dialogue as the dissemination of claims, attitudes, and background beliefs that are employed to allow the majority of society's citizens to determine if a candidate is a true representative of the whole.

An additional upside for House members attempting to connect with their districts is that technological advances offer congressmen a new outlet in which incumbents can bypass the media and reach target constituents without having their message filtered by journalists (Graber 2002; Esterling et al. 2013). Research has shown that political actors can use new media outlets to circumvent journalists in order to implement their own strategic messages without any filtering or political spin (Graber 2002; Lipinski and Neddenriep 2004; Esterling et al. 2013). The growth of internet availability coupled with its increased use by the public to gain political information has pushed incumbents in Congress to establish an online presence, with messages tailored to appeal directly to their constituents.

America's Hispanic voting age population has grown substantially in recent decades and politicians from both parties have begun to engage the Hispanic¹ community online in order to garner support (Casellas and Ibarra 2012). In the last decade the Hispanic population has increased 33%, a phenomenon that has demanded attention from academic and political circles (Segura 2012).

Research on websites as a means to communicate with the nation's Hispanic population has brought to light multiple questions concerning the complexity of the Latino community's political stance and policy preferences (Len-Rios 2002; Wilson 2009; Abrajano 2011; Valenzuela 2012). An article produced by the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at

¹ The terms "Latino" and "Hispanic" are used interchangeably in this report.

the University of Minnesota found that as of July 2013 thirty-one Democrats and five Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives provide at least partial Spanish language content on their webpage (Ostemeier 2013). Currently a small percentage of members in the House of Representatives have translation content on the websites. Nonetheless, the literature on political participation and political communication suggests that congressional members would be wise to invest in appealing webpages in English and Spanish that address issues, like immigration, that are important to Latino voters (Len-Rios 2002; Abrajano 2011).

The literature is divided on how much influence an official's website can have on crafting a favorable image among Hispanic constituents, but in order to recruit successfully both parties must continue to try and reach out through every available opportunity (Taylor and Kent 2004; Wilson 2009; Druckman 2010; Esterling, Lazer, and Neblo 2011). Previous research in this area has revealed that members of the House of Representatives reach out to the Hispanic population in their districts by providing links to Spanish language versions of their webpages, remarks on immigration reform, statements on other various topics, or pictures to demonstrate recognition of Hispanic concerns (Alvarez and Bedolla 2003; Gualti 2004; Gershon 2007; Casellas and Ibarra 2013).

POLITICAL INFORMATION AND HISPANIC CONSTITUENTS

Previous research on political engagement identified a “Digital Divide” which refers to minority populations’ lack of access to, and training on, advanced computer and online technologically. However, this gap is quickly closing as the national government, public schools, and other third party groups have worked to remedy this issue (Riel, Schwarz, and Hitt 2002; Fairlie 2007; Lopez, González-Barrera, and Patten 2013). Organizations such as the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) are working with public schools to promote Latino’s civic engagement through organizational involvement and research (Terriquez 2011; Cassellas and Ibarra 2012). As part of this endeavor, organizations will take a multi-level approach by encouraging parents to become leaders in their children’s school and inspire political involvement among the Latino youth (Terriquez 2011). Within the Latino community the youth are increasingly becoming information leaders because of their ability to acquire information through technological means (McDevitt and Butler 2011).

Efforts by schools and various organizations to close the Digital Divide appear to have had an effect. A report by the U.S. Department of Commerce found that the internet use of Latinos grew at a substantially faster rate from August 2000 to September 2001 than that of Caucasians or Asians (Fairlie 2007). More recently, The Pew Hispanic Research Center reported that the Hispanic population’s internet use has grown from 50% in 2001 to 78% in 2012, which mirrors the trends found in the general voting population (Lopez et al. 2013). Likewise, the Latino community has continued to make political engagement a family affair (Bloemraad and Trost 2008; Wilkin, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2009). Eighty-five percent of 19 to 29 year old Latinos use the internet as a means to obtain information while

the older Hispanic generations typically use non-English media sources; as a result, within the Latino community children become mediators of current political information to their families (Fairlie 2007; Félix and Ramírez 2008; Lopez 2011). The immigrant rights marches that occurred in 2006 provide one such example of this inter-generational exchange of political information. Politically active and technically savvy Latino youth informed the older generations about the issues concerning them and eventually spurred the movement (Fairlie 2007; Bloemraad and Trost 2008; Wilkin et al. 2009).

The literature has shown that the Latino population has proven to be the fastest growing electorate, unpredictable from election to election, and uncommitted to Democrats or Republicans (Connaughton and Jarvis 2004; Brown and Lopez 2013). Hispanics are also estimated by the Census Bureau to reach a population of 100 million by 2040. Those factors make the Latino electorate very appealing to both political parties. Currently the Latino population resides predominantly in key electoral states such as Florida, New York, Texas, and California that have 29, 29, 38, and 55 electoral votes respectively. Those states alone make up 28% (151) of the entire Electoral College or 56% of the necessary 270 electoral votes that are needed to win an election. Latinos have been constantly portrayed in the media as shopping for a political party; therefore, their choice will affect every citizen, not just the political party they choose.

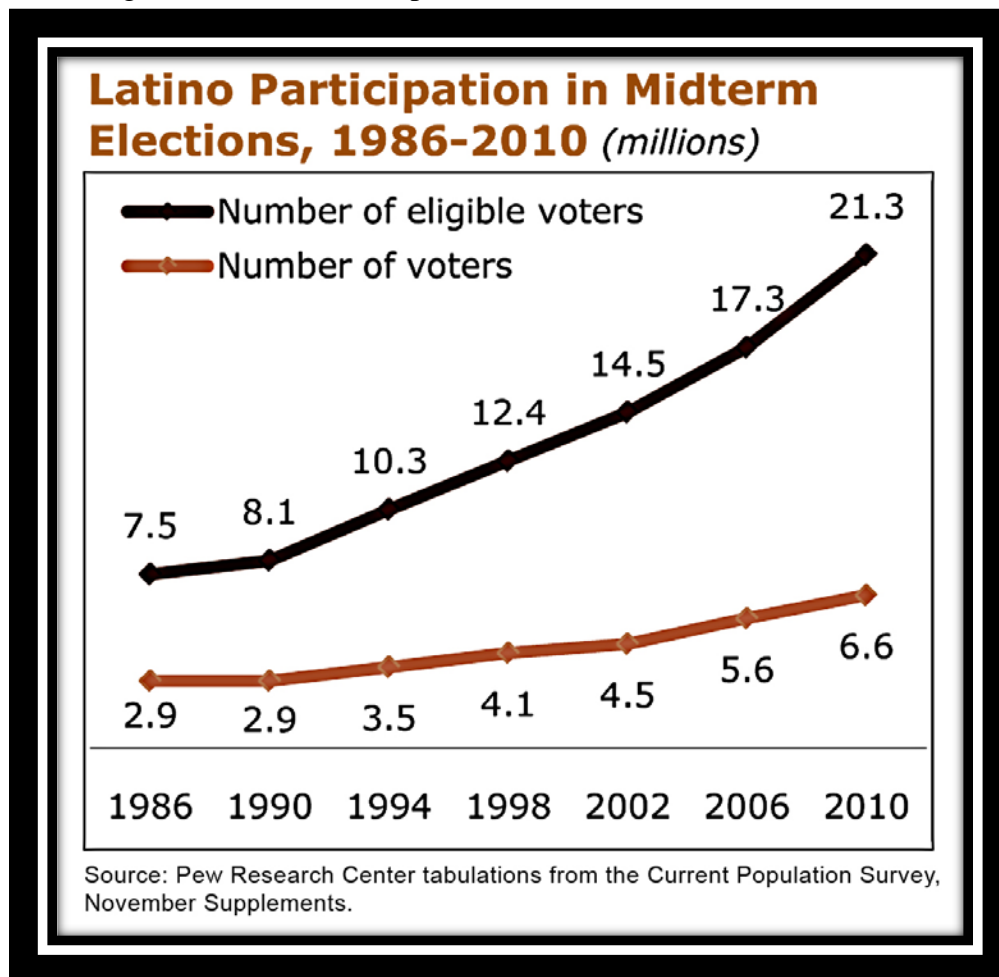
This study expands on this under-researched sub-field of Latino communication strategies by considering additional variables, such as members' political party, their region, and percent of Hispanics in their district, which may be contributing factors to the level of Hispanic voter outreach by House incumbents. The methodology of this study will be

modeled after past research efforts (Jones and Olsen 1996; Wilson 2009; Esterling et al. 2013) for continuity.

THE HISPANIC ELECTORATE

In 2010, approximately 6.6 million Latino citizens voted in the midterm elections. As shown in Figure 1 the 2010 turnout is an increase of one million voters from just four years earlier during an election cycle which, historically, has significantly lower turnout than presidential election years (Lopez 2011). However, the increase was not proportionate to the Hispanic population growth rate of four million. Therefore the percent of the population that voted compared to the portion eligible was actually lower than in 2006 (Lopez 2011).

Figure 1—Latino Participation in Midterm Elections, 1986-2010



Lopez, M.L. (2011). The Latino Electorate in 2010: More Voters, More Non-Voters.
<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/04/26/the-latino-electorate-in-2010-more-voters-more-non-voters/>

A recent study, conducted by de la Garza and Jang (2011), indicated that age, disengagement, and level of education were all contributing factors to the Hispanic community's decline in proportionate voting practices (Ramakrishnam and Espenshade 2001; Len-Rios 2002; Nuño 2007; Terriquez 2011). Disengagement can best be defined as cultural and societal barriers that the Hispanic community faces that hold them back as a whole from greater electoral contribution (de la Garza and Jang 2011). Scholars have theorized that foreign born and first generation Hispanics have been alienated by political parties because of a lack of interactive communication, language barriers, and limited access to information resources necessary for voter participation (Ramakrishnam and Espenshade 2001; McDevitt and Butler 2011; Lopez et al. 2013).

Both parties have made it a top priority to focus on recruiting the growing Latino population to their party (Casselas and Ibarra 2012). Connaughton and Jarvis (2004) found that political parties continue to mobilize specific voting coalitions even in a candidate-centered political era. Samuelson (2012) believes that an increase of native-born Latinos has created a sub-culture that is more receptive to outreach from political parties than recently naturalized citizens. Through political socialization native born Hispanics are becoming more accustomed to democratic practices, and outreach efforts by both parties are shifting the negative attitude that Hispanics have traditionally had about politics into a more positive light.

Congressional websites that serve the public as a source of political information about their particular representative are invaluable for a congressional office because of the ability to control the dissemination of information (Niven and Zilber 2001; Wilkin et al. 2009;

Druckman et al. 2010). Esterling et al. (2011) coined the term representative communication because democratic representation in the 21st century requires that legislators use the web to communicate directly with their constituents. Not only is the source of information unfiltered by the media but it shows what a specific congressman believes is important; therefore websites can work as a reference for their constituents to keep an up-to-date record on what is high priority to their representative (Sulkin, Courtney, and Veronica 2007). Recently, a rise in social media politics has been noted, but in regard to political information on the internet it still lags behind congressional websites.

The existing literature led to the development of the hypothesis that incumbent house representatives from the Democratic Party will use their official House.gov websites to reach out to Hispanic voters more than Republican members:

H₁: Democratic representatives will have more English to Spanish content on their webpages.

H₂: Democratic representatives will have more mentions of immigration policy under their immigration tabs.

H₃: Democrats will have more pictures of Hispanics on their home page and in their immigration tab than their Republican counterparts.

HISPANIC POPULATION GROWTH & PAST OUTREACH

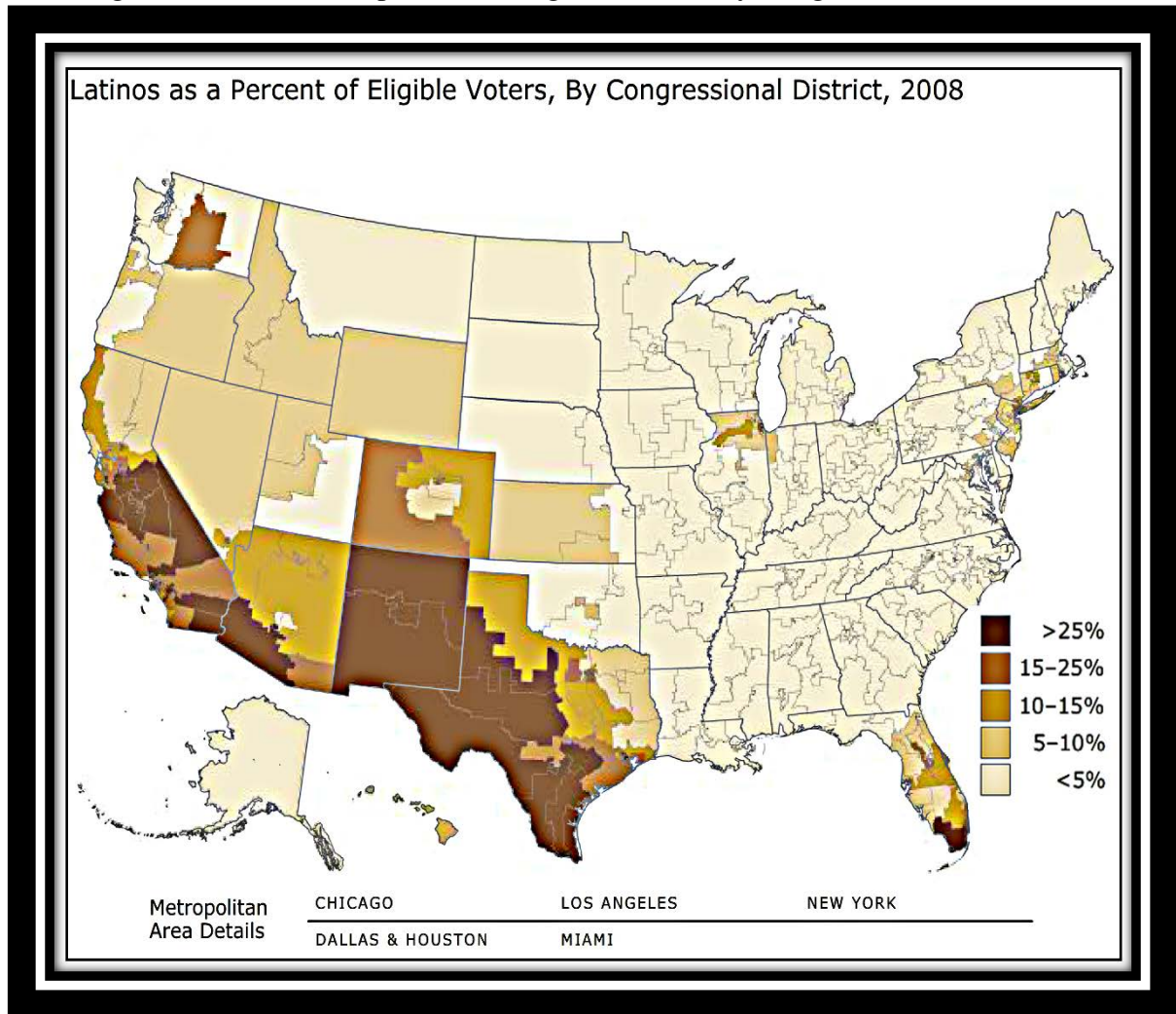
Past research has examined congressional websites as a means for politicians to target key constituent groups but has focused primarily on African American and female issues rather than Latinos (Gershon 2007; Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty S., and Nicholson-Crotty, J. 2009; Wilson 2009; Esterling et al. 2013). The growth in the Hispanic population in traditionally Republican states such as Texas has triggered a need for both parties to be more cognizant of Latino needs.

The growth of the Latino population has been felt across the country not just in states that border Mexico (Preston 2008; Daniels 2011, Lopez et al. 2013). Immigration reform has constantly been referred to on nightly news programs as an issue of national security and as a result representatives are beginning to put immigration at the top of their political agenda (Bullock and Hood 2006). With that in mind Hispanic outreach involves geographic considerations that some regions do not have to deal with, which could be a determining factor as to why some Congressmen do not focus on Hispanic outreach.

The distribution of the Hispanic population as shown in Figure 2 illustrates that a large majority of Hispanics are in the southwestern states as well as an accumulation along the east coast in some major metropolitan areas (Brown and Lopez 2013). The existence of a large Hispanic population does not force members of Congress to include outreach into their official webpages, but as the fastest growing population in America the Hispanics per district could soon demand attention regardless of miniscule voter turnout (Brown and Lopez 2013). A study conducted by Scherer (2012) found that Hispanics will greatly influence future elections even with a below average turnout based on growth patterns of the population. The

percent of Hispanics in congressional districts are estimated to increase and Congressmen will be forced to alter their communication strategies in response to the changing demographics.

Figure 2—Latinos as a percent of Eligible Voters, By Congressional District, 2008



Lopez, M. H. (2010). Latinos and the 2010 Elections: Strong Support for Democrats; Weak Voter Motivation. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2010/10/05/latinos-and-the-2010-elections-strong-support-for-democrats-weak-voter-motivation/>

From the existing research on Hispanic population trends the following hypotheses were developed:

H₄: Members in the House of Representatives from Western States will have more English to Spanish translation content than representatives from any other region.

H₅: Representatives from the Western Region will mention immigration policy under their immigration tab more than representatives from any other region.

H₆: Representatives from the Western Region will have more pictures of Hispanics on their official House.gov webpages than representatives from other regions.

H₇: The percentage of Hispanics in a district will be able to predict if a representative has English to Spanish content on their webpage, but not as accurately as political party.

H₈: The percentage of Hispanics in a district will be able to predict if a representative mentions immigration policy under their immigration tab, but not as accurately as political party.

H₉: The percentage of Hispanics in a district will be able to predict if a representative's webpages contains pictures of Hispanics, but not as accurately as political party.

METHODS

The data includes the official Congressional website of every incumbent candidate in the House of Representatives with the exception of the following districts: Washington D.C.; American Samoa; Guam; Northern Mariana Islands; Puerto Rico; and The Virgin Islands. They are excluded because although members from each of the preceding districts can perform most of the same functions, they are not allowed to vote on the final passage of legislation. Official Congressional Websites were superior to campaign websites because a Google search of a candidate's name produces the House.gov website. It also allows for standardization across the board even though most pages are set up differently.

Independent Variables

In the study the independent variables are political party, region of the representative, and the percentage of Hispanics in each Representative's district. The Hispanic population in each district could be used as a possible determinant as to why a Representative would have more Hispanic-specific outreach strategy. Websites are used as a medium to reach out to constituents and specifically supporters in order to mobilize and educate on representatives' policy preferences (Wilson 2009; Sulkin et al. 2007; Gershon 2007; Esterling et al. 2011). This research project uses official webpages as a means to judge policy preference, and in turn focuses on the incumbent because as the current representative of a district they are the only ones who have an official House.gov webpage. Because of the necessity to engage supporters the demographics of a district will shape policy concerns of incumbents' webpages.

Each Congressional representative was assigned a region 1, 2, 3, or 4 which corresponds with West, South, Midwest, and Northeast respectively. The Census Bureau's definitions of region were used to make the assignments. Some districts in America do not have a large Latino population and therefore the representatives would not be as compelled to reach out to Hispanic constituents (Bloemraad and Trost 2008). Region could possibly play a determining role in policy preference for members of Congress and their choice to reach out to Hispanic constituents.

Congressmen were assigned a 0 if they are a member of the Democratic Party and a 1 if they are a member of the Republican Party. Originally a number was designated for Independents but there were no seats held by Independents in the House of Representatives in the 103rd Congress. Understanding what role the other independent variables play in Hispanic outreach strategies will help us determine the role political party plays in the existence of specifically tailored messages to the Hispanic community through webpages.

Dependent Variables

Additional dummy variables include inclusion of immigration policy issues, English to Spanish translation, and Hispanic photo content. For the foremost, data was collected for the inclusion or exclusion of information under the Congressman's "Issues" tab regarding their stance on immigration. Each website was assigned a 0 if it does not include a stance on Immigration policy issue under the "Issues" tab and a value of 1 was assigned if the issue was addressed.

Since previous research suggests a campaign webpage's visual content can influence voter turnout, a Representative whose official site contains a picture of them with a person of

Hispanic origin on either their homepage or within the Immigration policy “Issues” tab was coded with a 1 (Gualti 2004). Conversely, the absence of a photo with a Hispanic constituent was assigned a 0.

The study also considered which members of Congress have adopted English to Spanish translations on the official webpage. For this study the existence of any English to Spanish translation including partial or third party translation software was seen as a form of outreach to Latinos and coded as a 1. The absence of any Spanish on an official webpage was coded as a 0.

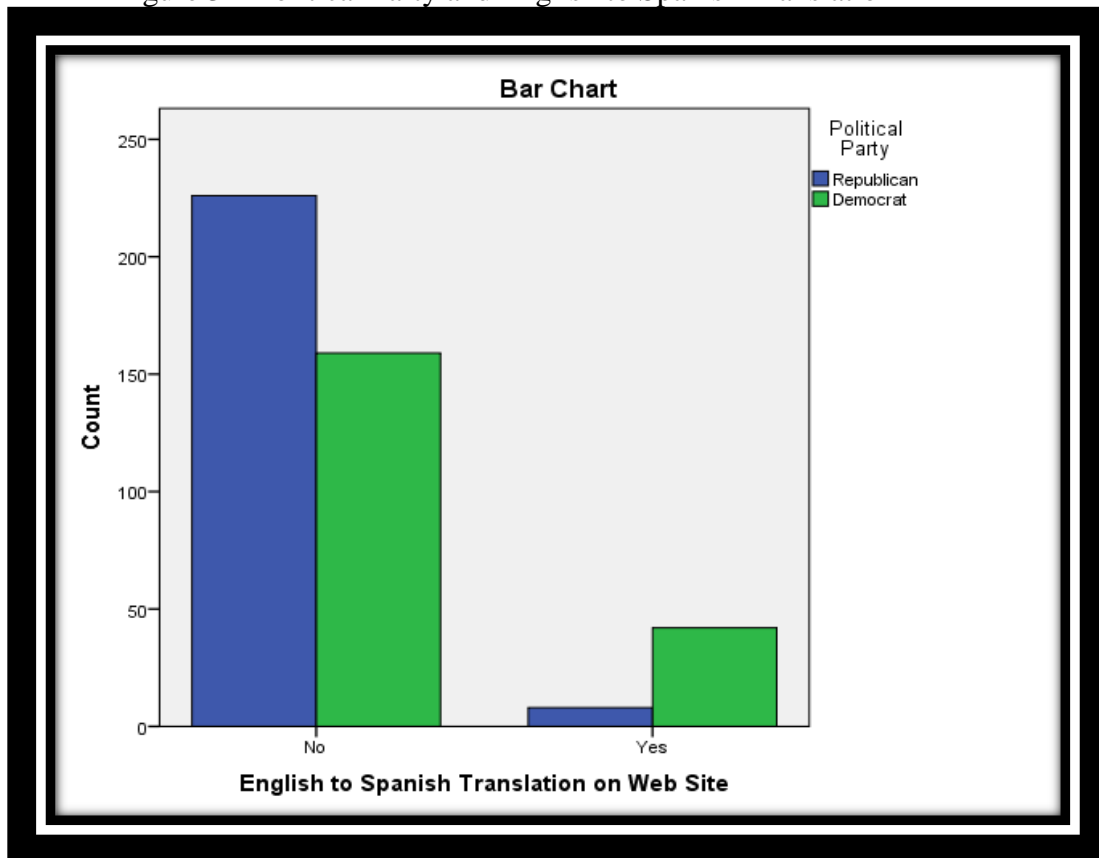
Finally, the study analyzed data from *Congressional Quarterly Research* and included the percentage of Hispanics in each district across America. Then a mixed methods approach was used to evaluate the incumbent House members’ webpages. Basic descriptive statistics provided summary results for comparison followed by a cross-tab analysis in SPSS to determine the strength of any correlations between the independent and dependent variables. Results were drawn not from a sample, but from the entire population of members in the House of Representatives in order to obtain a complete picture because of the low level of past research on the topic.

RESULTS

English to Spanish Translation and Political Party

An investigation of Official Congressional websites found that 226 Republicans and 159 Democrats did not have English to Spanish Translation content and out of 435 current members of Congress 50 have English to Spanish translation. As seen in Figure 3, forty-two are Democrats and eight are Republicans. A bivariate correlation phi efficient analysis estimates that rate of English to Spanish translation has a weak to moderate positive relationship (.273) with political party.

Figure 3—Political Party and English to Spanish Translation



The research was conducted on the entire population of the members of the House of Representatives and as a result the existence of a relationship constitutes statistical significance between the two variables. The positive relationship between the two variables shows that the occurrence of English to Spanish translation can be predicted weakly by a candidate's political party. The model summary of the two variables indicates that (.075) of the inclusion of English to Spanish translation content can be explained by political party.

A cross tabulation analysis of the two variables illustrates that the Democratic Party accounts for (.84) of the total English to Spanish content on all official webpages or 42 out of 50. However, the cross tabulation also shows that (.89) of Congressional House members do not have any form of English to Spanish translation content on their official websites.

The results categorized by political party illustrate that 96.6% of Republicans did not have translation content and 3.4% did whereas 20.9% of Democrats had the content compared to 79.1% that did not. The output suggests that there are indeed differences in the online outreach strategy of the two political parties, but that overall outreach through websites to the Latino community has yet to become a main focus of House Congressional members with only 11.5% engaging with English to Spanish translation content. The data supports Hypothesis 1 and allows the rejection of the null hypothesis that Republicans have more English to Spanish content on their webpages.

Spanish Translation Content by Region

The nominal by nominal symmetric measurements of the variables region and English to Spanish Translation results in a Cramer's V of (.226). The relationship would be described as a low positive, and would be considered statistically significant because the

numbers are drawn from a population rather than a sample. The model summary of the two statistics produces an r^2 of (.006) which would conclude that the predictive power of region is almost nonexistent in determining if a representative had English to Spanish translation content on their official webpage.

The cross tabulation of region split between West, South, Midwest, and Northeast provides a more in depth analysis of the relationship between the two variables. In this study the regions are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau and are represented by Congressional House Members as follows: West-102/23%; South-161/37%; Midwest-94/22%; Northeast-78/18%.² Western states make up 44% with 22 out of the 50 total websites with translation content. South and Northeast both make up 26% each, both with 13 webpages respectively of the total, and the Midwest has the smallest portion of overall websites with 4% or 2 sites. Each region has a different total number of representatives and their internal makeup reflects those differences with varying percentages of English to Spanish translation websites as shown in Table 1 Row 7.

The output suggests that a small relationship exists between region of the country and English to Spanish Translation that does not have significant explanatory power about a Congressional House Member's use of Spanish to English Translation. The results allow us to accept Hypothesis 4 because Representatives from Western states have significantly more translation content on their webpages than any other region.

² Refer to Appendix for detailed chart

Table 1 English to Spanish Translation compared to Region of the Representative							
Region of the Country							
			West	South	Midwest	Northeast	Total
English to Spanish Translation on Websites	No	Count	80	148	92	65	385
		% English to Spanish Translation on website	20.8%	38.4%	23.9%	16.9%	100%
		% within Region of the country	78.4%	91.9%	97.9%	83.3%	88.5%
		% of Total	18.4%	34%	21.1%	14.9%	88.5%
	Yes	Count	22	13	2	13	50
		% English to Spanish Translation on website	44%	26%	4%	26%	100%
		% within Region of the country	21.6%	8.1%	2.1%	16.7%	11.5%
		% of Total	5.1%	3%	.5%	3%	11.5%

Spanish Translation Content compared to Percent of Hispanic Population by District.

The study gathered data from the entire population of Congressional House Representatives and an investigation of the Hispanics per district produced a range of .01 to .87. A bivariate correlation co-efficient analysis as shown in Table 2 indicates that there is a moderate to substantial (.451) positive relationship between percent of Hispanics per district and English to Spanish Translation.

Table 2			
Percent of Hispanics per District and English to Spanish Translation			
		English to Spanish Translation on Website	% of Hispanics in District
English to Spanish Translation on Website	Pearson Correlation	1	.451
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	435	435

A model summary of the two variables estimates that 20% of English to Spanish Translation content can be explained by the percentage of Hispanics in a given district because of a r^2 that is (.203). As Jones and Olsen (1996) state, a single variable will not always totally account for the change in another and a more detailed examination of percentage of Hispanics per district and English to Spanish Translation indicates that factors other than political party must be accounted for. The data gathered suggests that more than a single variable plays a causal role in determining if a Congressional House member will have English to Spanish content on their webpage and helps in the endeavor to find a complete explanation of why some political parties reach out to Hispanics through English to Spanish content more than others. It forces the acceptance of the null hypothesis 7 that indicates the percentage of Hispanics in a district has a stronger relationship with English to Spanish translation content than political party.

Immigration Policy and Political Party

An investigation of the number of instances that Congressional House members mentioned immigration in the issues section of their webpage produces 112 Republican

mentions and 78 Democratic mentions. A cross tabulation analysis of the data shows that 43.7 % (190) of the 435 total Congressional House members mention immigration on their official webpage. A breakdown of the number of mentions shows that 58.9% of them belong to Republicans and 41.1% of them to Democrats.

A focus on political party shows that 47.9% of all Republicans mention immigration policy whereas 38.8% of all Democrats include immigration on their webpage. The Symmetric Measures, as shown in Table 3, of political party and immigration policy produces a Cramer's V of (.091) indicating that there is a negligible positive relationship. By the information displayed in Table 4 it seems that while there is a difference between the two parties in overall inclusion of immigration policy, the numbers do not reflect a significant relationship. The data forces us to reject Hypothesis 2 as it pertains to mentions of immigration policy because there is not a significant relationship.

Table 3		
Mentions of Immigration Policy and Political Party		
		Value
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.091
	Cramer's V	.091
	Contingency Co-efficient	.091
N of Valid Cases		435

Table 4 Mentions of Immigration Policy under Issues Tab by Political Party					
			Political Party		Total
			Republican	Democrat	
Mention of Immigration Policy under Issues Tab	Yes	Count	112	78	190
		% within Mention of Immigration Policy under Issues Tab	58.9%	41.1%	100%
		% within Political Party	47.9%	38.8%	43.7%
		% of Total	25.7%	17.9%	43.7%
	No	Count	113	114	227
		% within Mention of Immigration Policy under Issues Tab	49.8%	50.2%	100%
		% within Political Party	48.3%	56.7%	52.2%
		% of Total	26%	26.2%	52.2%

Immigration Policy and Region

The results of Congressional House members that mention immigration policy on their webpage categorized by region are as follows: West 41-no, 58- yes; South 72- no, 81- yes; Midwest- 59-no, 31-yes; and Northeast 55- no, 20- yes as shown in table 5. Eighteen members of the House of Representatives were excluded because they did not have an Issues tab on their House.gov webpage. The southern states had the highest percentage of mentions of immigration policy at 42.6%, followed by western states at 30.5% when compared to the total mentions across the country. Within each region the West had a larger percentage of mentions of immigration policy with 56.9% of Representatives from western states including immigration policy compared to 50.3% of the Representatives from southern states.

Table 5							
Region and Mention of Immigration Policy under Issues Tab							
			Region of the Country				Total
			West	South	Midwest	Northeast	
Mention of Immigration Policy under Issues Tab	No	Count	58	81	31	20	190
		% Mention of Immigration Policy under Issues Tab	30.5%	42.6%	16.3%	10.5%	100%
		% within Specific Region	56.9%	50.3%	33%	25.6%	52.2%
		% of Total	13.3%	18.6%	7.1%	4.6%	52.2%
	Yes	Count	41	72	59	55	227
		% Mention of Immigration Policy under Issues Tab	18.1%	31.7%	26%	24.2%	100%
		% within Specific Region	40.2%	44.7%	62.8%	70.5%	52.2%
		% of Total	9.4%	16.6%	13.6%	12.6%	52.2%

A cross tabulation analysis produced a symmetric measurement with a phi contingency Coefficient of (.238) which indicates that the relationship between region and mention of immigration policy has a low positive relationship. The low relationship between immigration policy and region suggest that other factors could cause House Congressional members to reach out to the Hispanic community through their webpages. The results produced cause us to accept the null of hypothesis 5 as it pertains to mention of immigration because Representatives from the South have more mentions of immigration policy than the West.

Immigration Policy and Percent of Hispanics per district

The results cause us to reject hypothesis 8 because the mentions of immigration policy and percent of Hispanics per district does not have a statically significant relationship.

Pictures of Hispanics and Political Party

The results show that a relatively low number of Congressional House members have pictures of Hispanics on their websites' home screen or issues tab with only 43 members (9.9%) from either party including them. As shown in Table 6, Democrats have 34 (79.1%) of the websites with Hispanic pictures compared to 9 (20.9%) for Republicans. Table 6 Row 7 indicates that with regard to political party, 16.9% of Democratic members have pictures of Hispanics on their webpage and Republicans as a whole have 3.8%.

Table 6					
Cross Tabulation of Pictures of Hispanics and Political Party					
			Political Party		Total
			Republican	Democrat	
Pictures of Hispanics on Website	Yes	Count	9	34	43
		% with Pictures of Hispanics on Website	20.9%	79.1%	100%
		% within Political Party	3.8%	16.9%	9.9%
		% of Total	2.1%	7.8%	9.9%
	No	Count	225	167	392
		% with Pictures of Hispanics on Website	57.4%	42.6%	100%
		% within Political Party	96.2%	83.1%	90.1%
		% of Total	51.7%	38.4%	90.1%
	Total	Count	234	201	435

A cross tabulation of Hispanic pictures and political party produces a Phi coefficient of (.218) that indicates a low positive relationship. A model summary of the two variables

determines that (.048) of the presence of Hispanic pictures can be explained by political party. The results support hypothesis 3 that Democrats have webpages that try to appeal to the Hispanic population more than their Republican counterparts.

Pictures of Hispanics and Region

An analysis of pictures of Hispanics on Congressional House members' webpages and region shows a disproportionate number of instances by Representatives in western and southern states. Each one of the following statistics—West 22/51.2%; South 16/37.2%; Midwest 2/4.7%; and Northeast 3/7%—accounts for a portion of the total 43 instances of pictures of Hispanics on Congressional House members' webpages. A cross tabulation of the variables establishes a contingency coefficient of (.234) which indicates that there is a low positive relationship between pictures of Hispanics on webpages and region of the country.

A model summary generates an r^2 value of (.046) which indicates that 4.6% of the inclusion of a picture of a Hispanic on an official congressional webpage can be explained by the region of the Congressional House member. The output produced suggests that region has a low relation to the occurrence of images of Hispanics on congressional webpages and has slightly weaker explanatory capabilities than political party. As such it adds to the working hypothesis that political parties can be used as a determinant of outreach strategy to the Hispanic community and enhances the overall picture of reasons behind outreach strategies through official webpages. The results support hypothesis 6 because representatives from western states have more pictures of Hispanics than any other region.

Pictures of Hispanics and Percentage of Hispanics per district

A bivariate correlation of pictures of Hispanics on congressional websites and percentage of Hispanics results in a Pearson Correlation of (.416) which indicates a moderate positive relationship. A model summary of the two variables produces an r^2 value of (.173) that allows the researchers to determine that 17.3% of the inclusion of a picture on a congressional website can be explained by the percent of Hispanics in a given district. The addition of this output allows us to see a clearer picture of all the variables that influence the inclusion of pictures of Hispanics on Congressional House members' webpages. The results cause us to accept the null of hypothesis 9 because percent of Hispanics per district has a stronger relationship with pictures on a webpage than political party.

DISCUSSION

This study focused on political parties and their specific strategies to reach a new growing Hispanic electorate. The original question arose at the Democratic National Convention in 2012 where the Texas delegates conversed about turning Texas blue by reaching out to the growing Hispanic electorate in Texas. Past research has focused on outreach to African Americans and women (Gershon 2007; Grissom 2009; Wilson 2009; Esterling et al. 2013).

Considerable gaps exist in the research on outreach to the Latino community through online mediums due to the technological gap that has existed between Latinos and the rest of the American population in recent decades. This project sought to build on the past research of academics such as Len-Rios (2002), who conducted a study on the Bush/Gore campaign to see which candidate had better outreach through websites, and Wilson (2009) who focused on how minority Congressional Representatives represented minorities on their webpages. In both instances these studies found that political party played a determining factor in the way that the politicians reached out to the Hispanic community.

Past research led to the hypothesis that Democrats are viewed more favorably by Latinos not only because their ideologies more closely align with the Hispanic populations, but also because they make it a priority to reach out to them. A July 2013 article produced by Ostermeier (2013) found 31 Democrats had Spanish translations compared to 5 Republicans. The literature continued to stack in favor of the Democratic Party, but an increase in the general abundance and use of electronic mediums for political information coupled with the

growing Hispanic youth population offered both parties a chance to sway the Hispanic electorate in their favor.

Past research has focused on highly visible candidates such as Presidential, gubernatorial, and minority candidates that focus on minority rights. Candidates that run for higher offices that encompass a larger constituency are not as affected by certain subsets of the population such as the Latino base in congressional districts and therefore their outreach is meaningful but not as essential to their livelihood as a political representative.

Nationwide, districts and regions address issues differently. Some research has claimed that immigration reform is an issue of national concern, but the data collected here shows that there are regional variances in attention that representatives pay to Hispanic concerns. Even in this limited study blatant discrepancies exist between representatives from the southern and western regions where the outreach is prevalent, and the Northeast and Midwest representatives that overall do not take steps to address the Hispanic community.

The research hypothesis that the Democratic members in the House of Representatives would be more likely to have official government webpages that reached out to the Hispanic population than their Republican counterparts was supported by the data collected. The analysis of congressional websites coded as having English and Spanish language versions or translations and use of visual elements featuring Hispanic constituents revealed that Democrats are significantly more likely to use their House.gov page as a means for outreach efforts to Hispanic voters.

The issue tab of each website was also included in the dataset. Incumbent House members' inclusion or omission of immigration as a featured policy link was coded

accordingly. While the results revealed that House Republicans' mentions of immigration policy under their issue tabs outnumbered Democrats', it was not statistically significant so it was determined that simply listing a policy issue that is of great interest to Hispanic voters had no relation to political party. However, future research efforts into the tone of the information presented on congressional members' websites is needed. For example, data could be collected on whether specific House members are for increased border security or expanding paths to citizenship.

The regions were identified based off the census data, and the results are in accordance with population dispersion as well as proximity to the border. Learning the role region played in political outreach helps sketch a clearer picture of all the variables that need to be accounted for in order to determine a specific candidate's outreach strategy to the Hispanic community, as well as what predictive power political party could have.

The shifting political landscape and increase in Hispanic clout merited additional investigation into how members of the House of Representatives, the country's most directly representative federal body, have adjusted their outreach strategies to garner support from the Latino population. The data gathered from each incumbent in the House of Representatives official Congressional webpage adds an important dimension to understanding outreach strategies. Choosing just to study the incumbents' official pages limited the scope of the study but allowed for control for the strength of the challenger that each representative was facing. Incumbents inherently have the upper hand but in some cases challengers are not competitive so the information on their webpages would have skewed the data. Each variable was carefully selected and chosen because of the ability to specifically tailor a

message to the Hispanic constituents within a given district. Coding of the immigration tab was chosen based on the mention of immigration policy. A better approach would have been to establish a guideline for favorable immigration policy and unfavorable and code accordingly. However, to account for subjectivity every mention of immigration policy was included as long as it was addressed under a representative's issue tab.

The results support hypothesis 1 and 3, but the lack of data on the official webpages creates a weak relationship among the variables. Fifty members total have English Translation content on their webpages and 43 have pictures of Hispanics. Almost half of Congressional House members mention their stance on immigration policy but the analysis suggests that there is not a significant relationship between party and mentioning immigration policy.

This research serves as a baseline to determine the current subset of Congressional House members that have sought out the Latino community. Just eight months after the 2013 Ostermeier study the occurrence of Spanish translation content on Congressional websites has increased almost 40%. The lack of data available shows that while politicians and academic researchers alike speculate the coming of a large politically involved Hispanic electorate, current members of the House of Representatives have yet to act on their own rhetoric.

The Hispanic population is large, but the voter turnout for the Hispanic population is dismal at best. Some studies suggested that supporters and politically active constituents are the only ones that search out information on an official Congressional website. Most research

into the complexities of the Hispanic population suggests that as a more educated youth matures the Hispanic electorate will begin to vote and become more politically engaged.

CONCLUSION

While it is clear that political party is a factor that determines a Congressional representative's outreach strategy, it is not the only factor, and it is most likely not even the most important. The results show that neither party has entirely adopted the practice of reaching out to the Hispanic population, at least not through online mediums. However, the importance of the research extends beyond simple online mediums. The results suggest that Democrats are currently more proactive in engaging the Hispanic population. While this study only focuses on the online portion of Congressional outreach strategies an investigation into other aspects would answer questions that this study has raised. The Hispanic population has been labeled a sleeping giant in the political realm (de la Garza and Jang 2011). The early portion of the 21st century will be a defining moment in American politics if the Hispanic population decides to fully support one of the parties. Political scientists must continue to research the outreach strategies of political leaders and what factors encourage them to reach out to Hispanics specifically.

The strength of the relationship between percentage of Hispanics per district and outreach strategies indicates that constituency might play a larger role in an incumbent's outreach strategy than their political party. In recent decades the strength of political parties has begun to deteriorate and campaigns have become more candidate focused. Further research should be conducted to determine the power that constituency and political parties have over individual candidates' platforms. A more detailed picture of each congressional district's voting constituency would allow researchers to determine more clearly why each candidate addresses issues in the manner that they do. Further research should look at the

same factors particularly English to Spanish translation as it had the greatest relationship with political party. This research should be conducted in a longitudinal study in order to track the growth in Hispanic outreach compared to the growth in Hispanic population. Political parties are here to stay and the growth in the Hispanic population cannot go unnoted. Currently both parties are underutilizing the Hispanic electorate that makes up 16% of eligible voters. Thus, while Democrats are doing a better job in reaching out, both parties are still viable options for the Hispanic population. In the coming decades if Republicans adopt political strategies that match the rhetoric they could advance past the Democratic party in terms of support.

APPENDIX

Northeast: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania

Midwest: Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, North Dakota, Minnesota, South Dakota, Missouri

South: Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas,

West: Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington,

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